

Bourland Trestle: Gateway To Timber

Stanislaus National Forest

Mi-Wok Ranger District

ROG 16-51-08; 05/12



Bourland Trestle, 1970: photo courtesy of J. B. Lowe

Bourland Trestle is a well-known, narrow gauge logging railroad trestle in the Stanislaus National Forest. Trestles were vital links in the railroad logging chain. If these trestles were damaged or destroyed, logging and sawmill operations could come to a standstill until the necessary repairs were made. The remains stand as visible reminder of a richly historic period when lumber was “king” and the railroad a vital “queen” necessary for bringing lumber to sawmills after harvest. At the end of a pleasant drive, hike or bike, stop by the Bourland Trestle for a beautiful mountain picnic as your reward.

The trestle was part of the Westside Lumber Company system, operating between 1900 and 1960. West Side rails eventually reached 70 miles of mainline track and 250 miles of branch lines, spur grades and sidings. Built about 1922, Bourland Trestle was located 43 miles from the mill in Tuolumne City. The trestle stood 315 feet in length and 76 feet high. The fire danger was great for these large timber trestles. West Side Railroad kept a watchman at all the major bridges to watch passing trains and check for flying sparks.



At Bourland, a watchman's cabin stood beside the trestle until it burned in the early 1980's: photo courtesy of J.B.Lowe



Bourland Trestle, today: photo courtesy of Erin Potter

Gradually, the need for railroads to transport timber gave way to more modern methods, principally truck transport from harvest site to mill. In stages, the railroads were taken apart in a methodical reversal of their painstaking creation.

Today, Bourland Trestle is the centerpiece of a vision of a “rails-to-trails” experience, running some 65 miles of the mainline West Side from Tuolumne City to Cherry Valley. The first two legs—from Miramonte outside Tuolumne City to River Ranch Campground and from Hull Creek to the Clavey River—have already been completed. Brochures for these treks can be obtained at the Mi-Wok District Office.

Proposed long-term goals for Bourland Trestle include full or partial restoration of the trestle as a safe pedestrian bridge while retaining its historic flavor and character. The trestle was partially stabilized in 1995 but damaged again in the floods of 1997. More work is left to accomplish with each passing year.

Federal laws protect the physical remains that illustrate our history, insuring that valuable heritage resources like the Bourland Trestle will be there for future generations of Forest visitors. Help us by enjoying your discovery of these special places and not damaging or removing anything found therein.

For more information and reading material on the railroads that ran through the Stanislaus, contact us:

Mi-Wok Ranger District
24695 Hwy 108
PO Box 100
Mi Wuk Village, CA 95346
(209) 586-3234
FAX: (209) 586-0643
TDD: (209) 586-0262

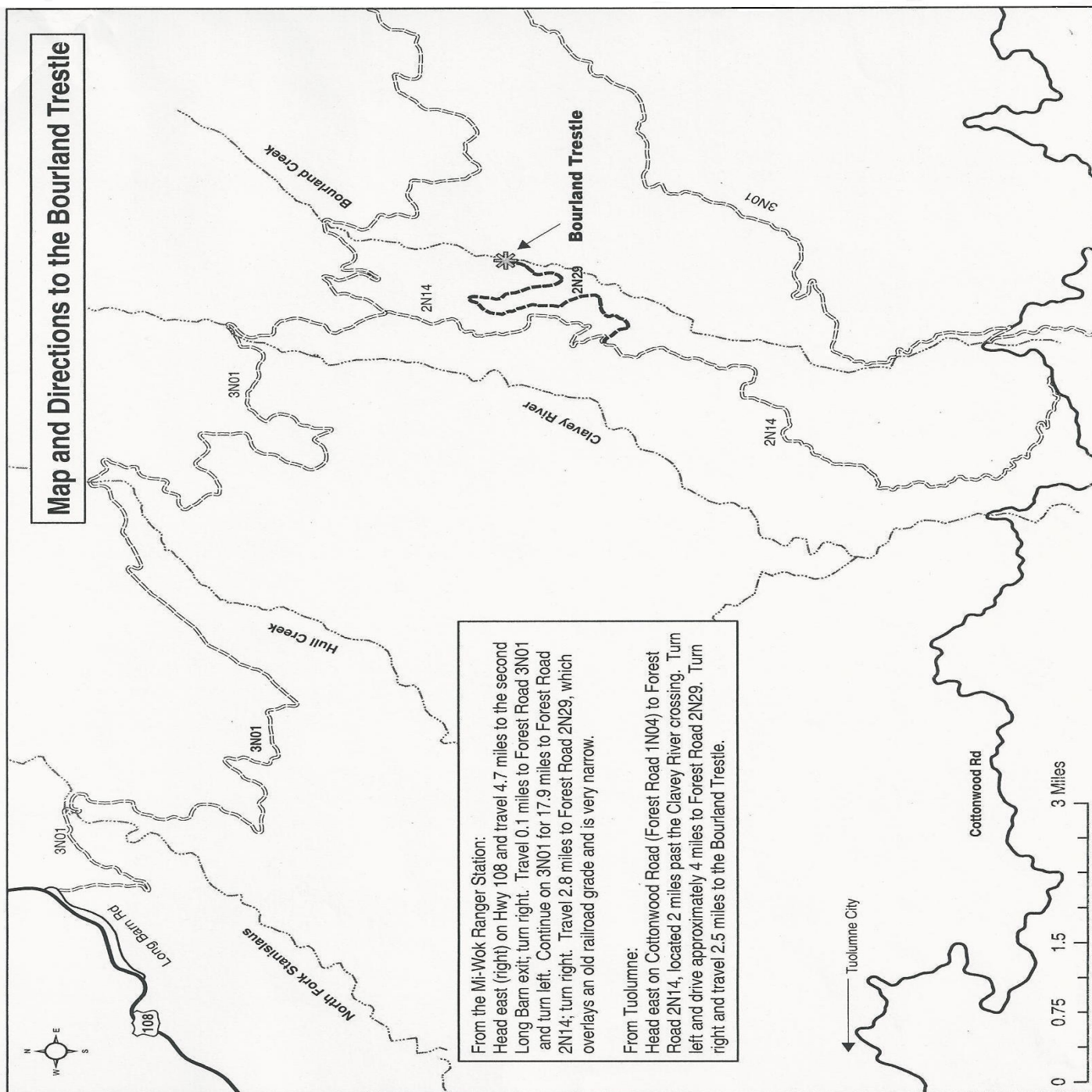
If you are interested in helping to restore Bourland Trestle, please contact District Archaeologist at the Mi-Wok Ranger District.



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region

Stanislaus National Forest
www.fs.usda.gov/stanislaus

Map and Directions to the Bourland Trestle



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.